



Revolution No.9

Shane Acker brings his Tim Burton-approved animation to the big screen

"THE SHORT WAS SO BIZARRE AND strange that I had no idea anyone would ever want to turn it into a feature," says director Shane Acker, speaking of his Oscar-nominated 2005 animation about a burlap sack creature's adventure in a post-apocalyptic world. "So when I was approached to turn it into a feature I was like, 'Oh wow — really? Okay, let's give it a shot.'"

Four years later that "shot" has become this month's 9, a unique CG animation about a band of miniature scrap men battling for survival in a bleak landscape run by malevolent machines. Dubbed "stitchpunk" for its characters' design, the film is co-produced by Timur Bekmambetov and Tim Burton, whose own peculiar stop-motion style is echoed in Acker's universe.

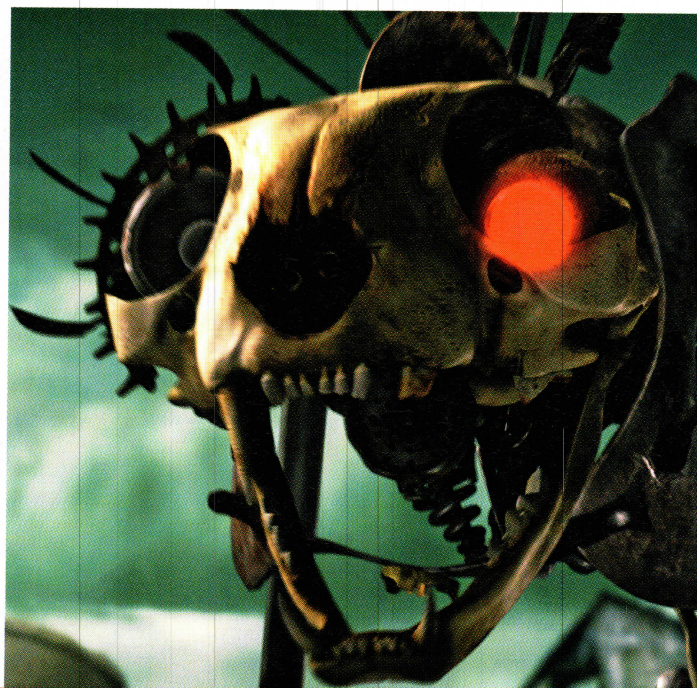
"He was really taken by the short," Acker says of Burton's response to 9, "so when he heard that we were looking to have him be the creative godfather for

the project, he said he'd love to help in any way he could. Just the fact that he saw my work was really quite an honour.

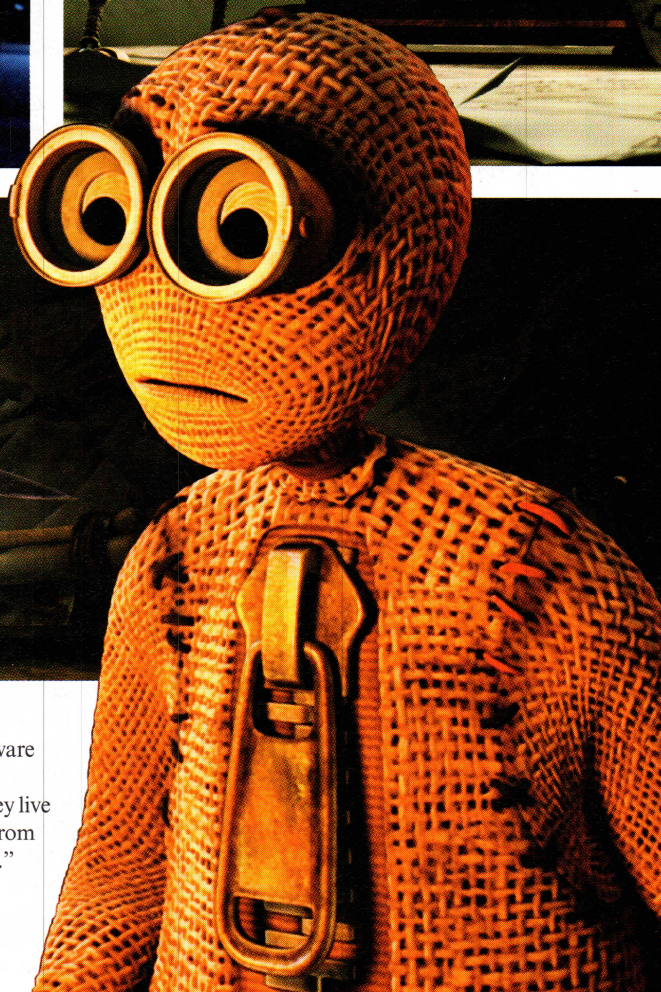
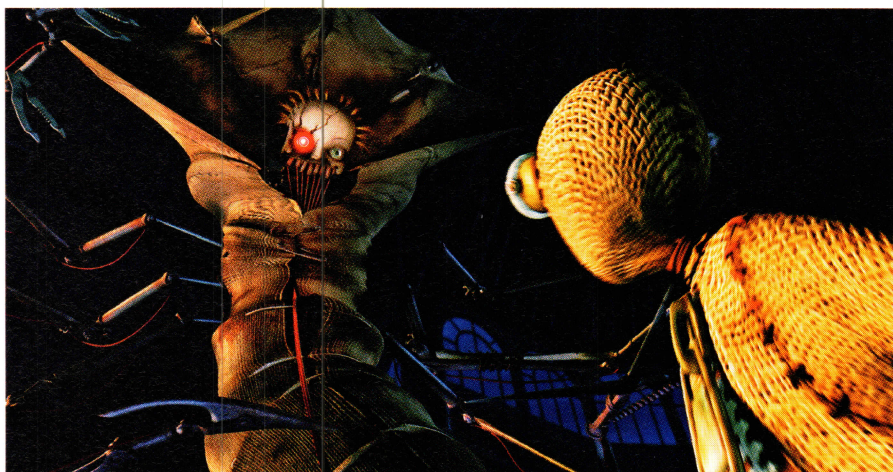
"We knew we were trying to do something different," he continues, "and pushing some boundaries in a medium that is typically considered a children's medium."

For the first-time feature director, 9 represents the culmination of a decade-long journey begun when he was a film student at UCLA and first conceived the story. Curiously, Acker studied architecture and sculpture before moving into animation, a fact reflected in the very real, tactile feel of the movie's environment. A fan of influential stop-motion filmmakers the Brothers Quay and Jan Svankmajer, Acker's sense of movement and depth renders 9 more live action experience than CG fabrication.

"Back when I was doing 9, CG animation was all kind of like chrome dinosaurs and really bright, cheery



► RAMBO VIS NO LONGER A MONSTER MAN-BEAST SCI-FI OUTING ► CULT METAL BAND ANVIL TO CAMEO IN



places and things were overly lit," he says. "There was no darkness, no grime, no dirt. I wanted to bring a kind of sense of history and age and texture to the CG world."

This would often see Acker and his design team scavenging the junkyards of Los Angeles, sculpting scrap into characters for inspiration.

"I had the idea that these creatures were made by a human who was in exile and was creating them out of whatever material was

at hand — so that's why they're made from random bits and pieces of discarded hardware or old stained pieces of cloth and burlap. Somehow they fit the ruined world that they live in; they feel like they've organically come from that world of leftover and forgotten things."

LUKE GOODSSELL

> 9 is released on December 9 and is reviewed on page 48.

MICHEL GONDRY'S *GREEN HORNET* ► RUMOUR WEB: RACHEL McADAMS TO BE BLACK CAT IN *SPIDER-MAN 4*?